PHOTOGRAPHIC VIEWS

IN

MADURA

NORMAN

PART 1

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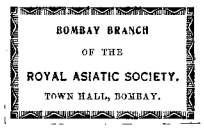

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PHOTOGRAPHIC VIEWS

IN

MADURA.

BY CAPTAIN L. TRIPE, GOVERNMENT PHOTOGRAPHER,

MADRAS PRESIDENCY.

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PART I.

With Descriptive Notes,

BY

MARTIN NORMAN, ESQ.,

M. C. S.

1858.

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LIST OF VIEWS WITH DESCRIPTIONS.

No. I.

The Elephant Rock.

An enormous mass of granite or sienite situated to the north of the town of Madura, altogether isolated from the neighbouring Hills, and when viewed from the S. E. or S. W. bearing a strong resemblance to a couchant Elephant, with its trunk extended in front. The origin of the rock according to Hindu legends is as follows. In the reign of Vikrama Pandyan the (Soran) king of Kanchipuram (called by the English Conjeveram) invaded Madura at the head of 8000 Bauddhas or Samanal, bringing with him an enormous Elephant, which had risen supernaturally from the flames of a huge sacrificial pit dug by the King. This Elephant was however destroyed by Shiva, whose aid was invoked by the Pandyan King with a rocket called Narasimha Astram; and the carcase, transformed to a mountain, remains to this day.

The legend goes on to say that the rocket was left sticking in the mountain; this is invisible to ordinary mortals, though possibly the stump of the flagstaff left to mark the hill as a station during the grand Trigonometrical survey, might be recognized as the remains of the sacred missile by a devout Hindu of credulous temperament.

The rock is about 1¼ mile long; and 250 feet high, measuring to the top of the Elephant's head.

No. II.

S. E. Angle of the Tirambur Pagoda.

This fortified Temple stands in an open plain about eight miles East of Madura; N. of the Vaigai river. Orme calls it Kovilgudi; and mentions a town which surrounded it, called Tirambur; This town has now almost disappeared; and the building represented is called the Tirambur Pagoda. In a Tamil manuscript translated by the Reverend W. Taylor, it is called Tirumokur or Tirumukkur. The shrine is of no special celebrity; but the Temple bore a somewhat important part as a fortification in the middle of the last century, when the English, as partizans of Muhammed Ali, the Nawab of Arcot, were in arms against the French who had sided with Chanda Sahib, the Diwan of a former Nawab, and who had up to his death in 1752 been the rival of Muhammed Ali, for the dignity of Nawab. In 1736 Chanda Sahib had appointed his brother governor of Madura and the surrounding districts; he was however killed in 1741 and Chanda Sahib himself taken prisoner to Satara. Subsequently to his release and his investiture by the French as Nawab of Arcot in 1750, one Alam Khan, who had formerly been in Chanda Sahib's service, corrupted the garrison of Madura and held the city for Chanda Sahib. After his death which happened in April 1752, we are informed that Madura was held by another partizan of Chanda Sahib's family, who suffered the fortifications of the city to fall into a state of disrepair; and maintained a garrison wholly insufficient for the defence of the place. When therefore in 1755 the English under Colonel Heron marched against Madura, in concert with Mafuz Khan the Nawab's brother, the Governor abandoned the town, and took refuge in Kovilgudi, or the Tirambur Pagoda. Colonel Heron after taking possession of Madura, marched against the fugitive Governor in Kovilgudi; but he had fled leaving his troops to defend the place.—The English were without siege Guns or ladders, but deeming it a disgrace to retreat, Colonel Heron, and Muhammed Isaf the commander of the Native disciplined troops, attempted to burn down the gates of the Pagoda with bundles of straw, contrary to expectation this expedient was successful and the Pagoda was taken and plundered. The brass images found therein, worshipped by the people of the country, and particularly says Orme by the "Colleries" as he quaintly terms the Kallar, were torn down from their pedestals and carried away; "an exploit for which the troops were held in utter detestation," subsequently when Colonel Heron was marching back from Madura to Trichinopoly (22nd May, 5th June 1755,) through the passes of Nattam, these "Colleries" perseveringly harassed the troops and camp followers, creating much confusion and loss; in the midst of these proceedings, Orme graphically relates that "the confused outcries of the enemy were changed on "a sudden to one voice, and nothing was heard on all sides but continued repetitions "of the word "Swami" (meaning god,) which expression they accompanied with violent "gesticulation and antic postures like men frantic with joy, for some of them cutting "down the tumbrils they had seized discovered in them most of the little brazen images "which the English had plundered at Kovilgudi. It seemed as if they could not "have received more delight in rescuing their wives and children from captivity; "however after their gods were conveyed out of danger, they renewed their attacks and "continued them at intervals for several hours."

No. III.

View of the N. E. angle of the Tirambur Pagoda.

The N. E. angle of the Pagoda described above. The projecting bastion is peculiar and rarely seen. The few houses under the Pagoda walls are all that remain of the former town of Tirumbur.

No. IV.

The Teppa-kulam.

A large tank 2 miles East of the Town; it is about 300 yards square. The sides are of cut stones throughout, with flights of steps at intervals. In the centre is an island containing an ornamental Mundapam or Pavilion. Into this the images of the god Sundareshwara and his consort Minakshi, are brought and placed at a certain festival early in each year. They previously take their pleasure by being rowed or punted about the tank (kulam) in a gaily decorated raft (teppam). The tank was built by Tirumalai Nayak, who is said to have expended upon it a lakh of pons, and to have given land with a rental of 10,000 Pons, for the expenses of the annual festival. It is useless to speculate on the real cost of the work; forced labour having been in all probability largely called into play. The tank is supplied from a channel taken off from the Vaigai river.

No. V.

The Tamukkam or Tamkam.

This is a building situated N. E. of the town of Madura. It now forms the residence of the subordinate Judge of the station. It is supposed to have been built at the same time as the palace (Circa A. D. 1630) for the purpose of witnessing fights between human beings and wild animals or (as other accounts say with perhaps more probability when the size of the building is taken into consideration) for a cock-pit. The style of architecture of the principal room, a circular appartment, with a vaulted roof, surrounded by a raised gallery, exactly resembles that of parts of the Palace. Its name appears to have been derived from the then appellation of the field wherein it was constructed, Tamukka-pottah.

The distinctive features of the building have now been to a great extent lost, owing to the adaptation of the building to an European residence.

It may be observed that the pillars supporting the roof are of the same highly polished black granite as those which are round the Simhasanam or throne in Tirumalai Nayak's Choultry.

No. VI.

The Causeway across the Vaigai River.

This forms the main entrance to the Town of Madura from the North. It is 133 yards in length. The stone pillars at the sides are about ten feet high.

In the rainy season ropes are attached to the pillars the whole way across, to enable pedestrians, who may be wading across when there is water in the river, to keep their footing, or to save themselves in the event of a sudden rush of water, by clinging to a post until assistance can be rendered from the shore. In 1853, a train of grain carts crossing during the rainy season was swept away by the sudden rise of the river; the drivers saved themselves by climbing on to the stone pillars over the tops of which the water speedily rose; they were with difficulty rescued one by one by launching a raft from a considerable distance up the river and guiding it past each post successively, repeating the process until all had been brought to land.

No. VII.

The Neerali Mundapam.

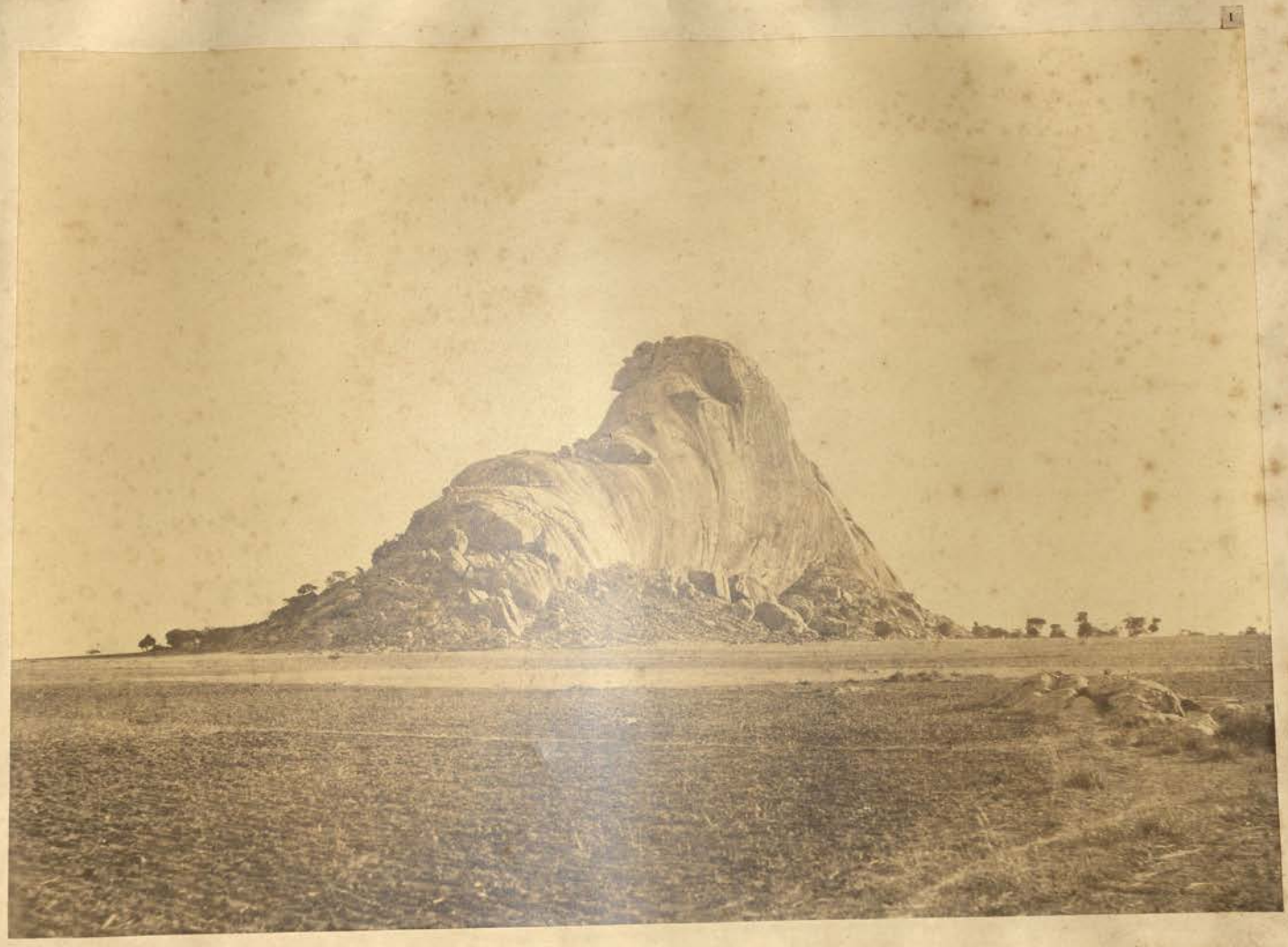
Situated in the bed of the River and used on the occasion of an annual festival for the resting place of the god Sundareshwara and his consort Minakshi.

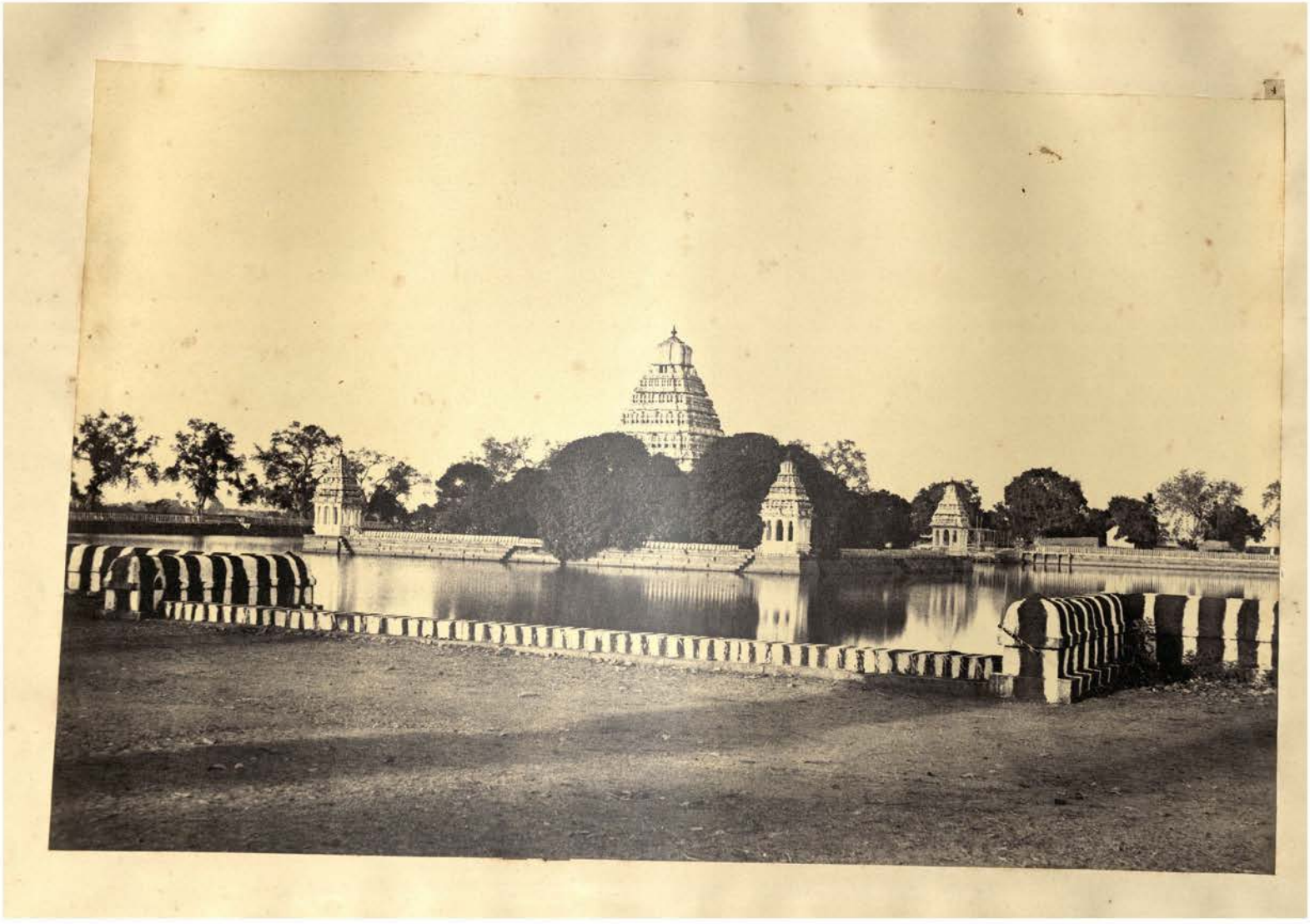
Nos. VIII. IX. & X.

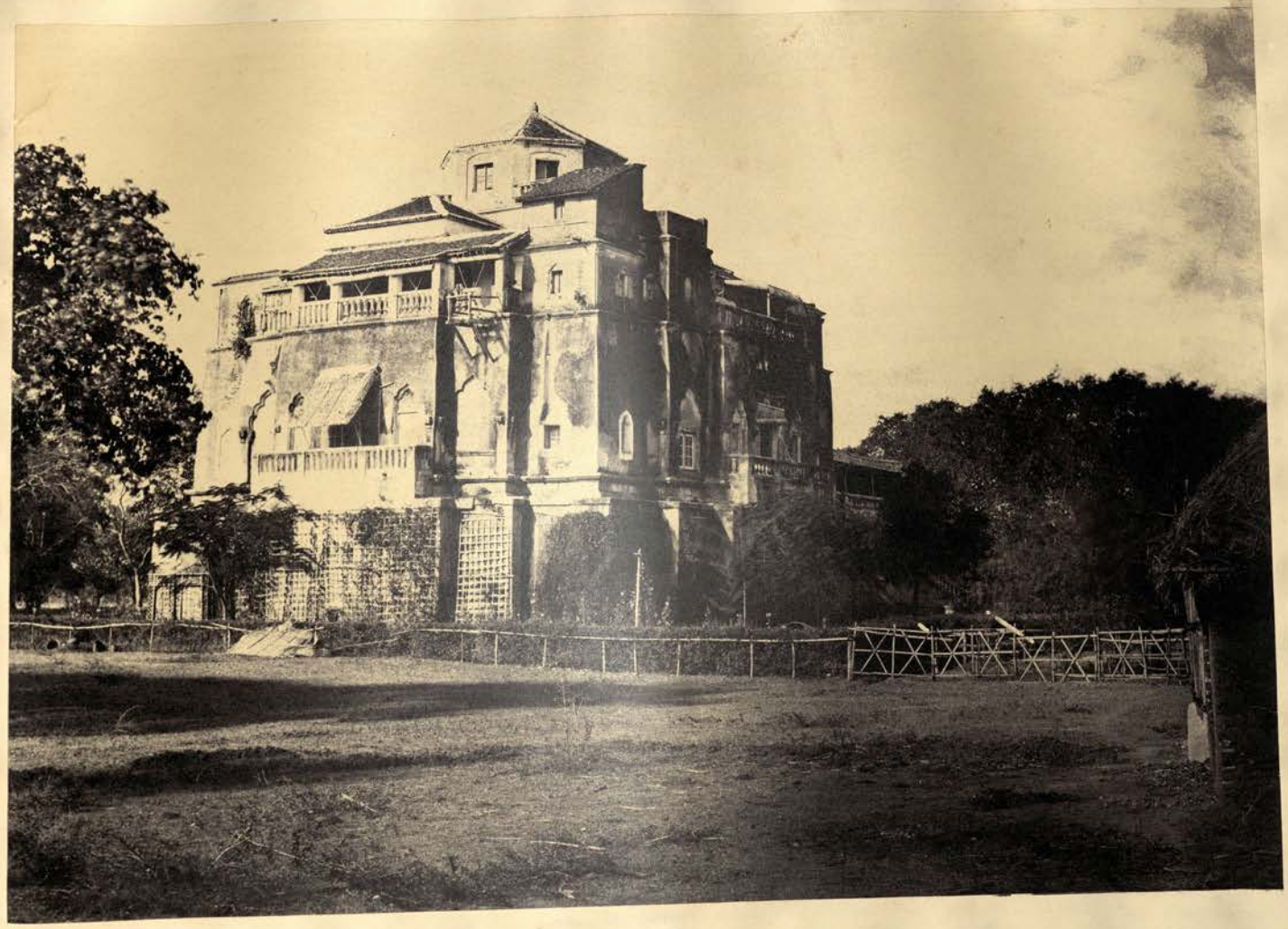
The Raya Gopuram from E.—Basement of a monolith in the Raya Gopuram.—The Raya Gopuram from W.

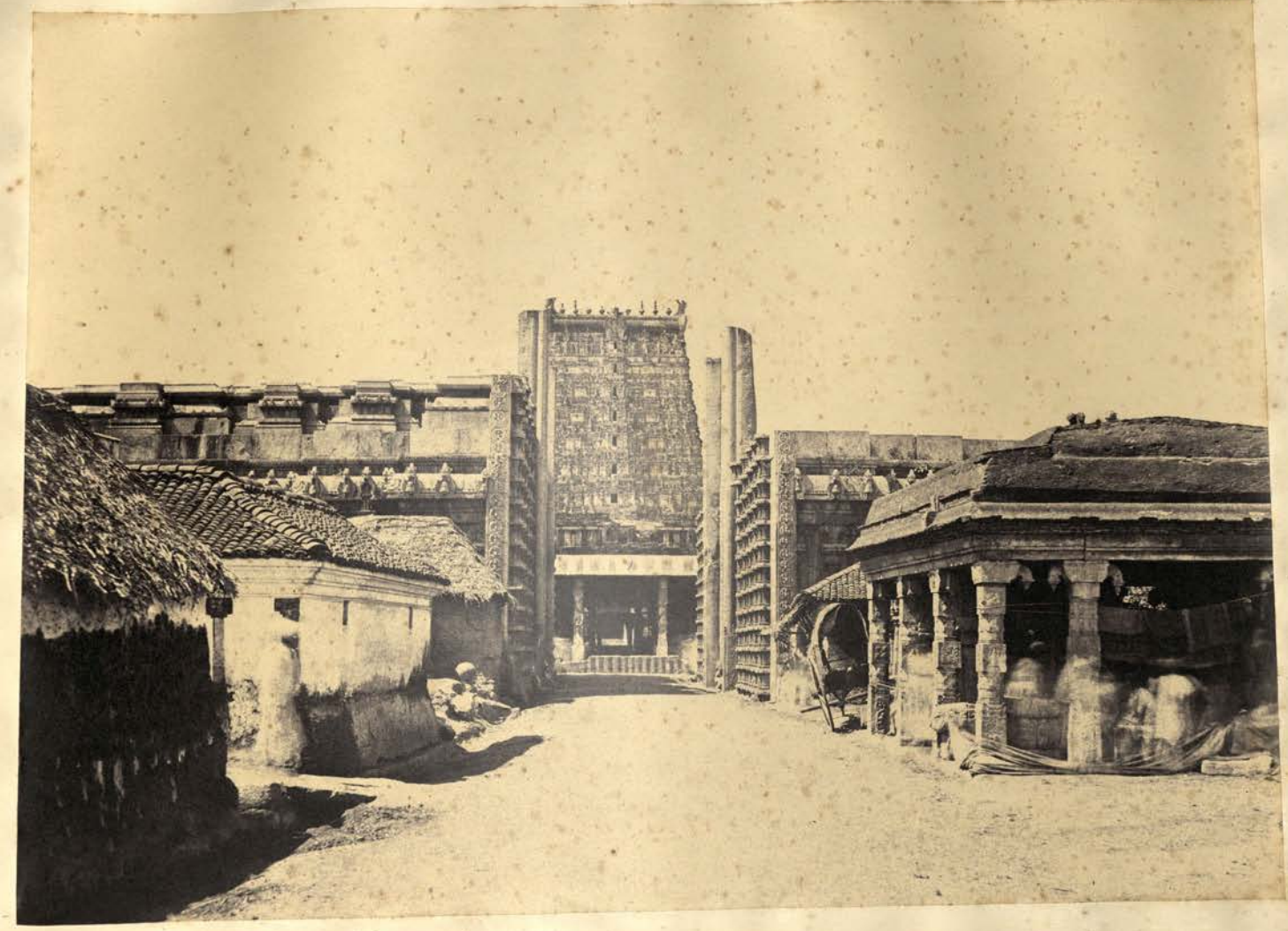
An unfinished Gopuram or Tower supposed to have been built by Tirumalai Nayak. It would have been of enormous height if completed but only the basement (of cut stone) has been finished. The dimensions of this are as follows, length from North to South 38 yards, from East to West 39 yards, height above ground 10½ yards, width of Doorway 7¼ yards. Though inferior to the (similarly incomplete) Raya Gopuram at Sri-rangam, as regards general magnitude it is in no way surpassed in elegance of design and proportion and delicacy of carving. The most remarkable feature of the one at Madura is the four monolithic pillars in the gateway. Their length is no less than 57 feet, underground and above. Many of the huge blocks of stone at the Sri-rangam Temple are of very much greater girth, but the Madura monoliths are it is believed unequalled in length. They are carved with delicate scroll work.

The exact depth of the foundations of the Gopuram is unknown. An effort was made to ascertain it but the workmen were stopped by water at a depth of 13 ft. 6 in.









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